Surat to Kosamba has been included in the budget. However, in view of augmentation of section capacity in Ahmedabad-Mumbai section by introduction of automatic block signalling system, this project is being regulated as per low operational priority.

Further, survey for doubling of Delhi-Ahmedabad has been taken up to assess the need of doubling of this route.

Railway's surplus manpower

1984. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the World Bank's estimates of Railway's surplus manpower at half a million people;

(b) if so, how new recruitment of 23,500 persons in the garb of improving safety and 35,000 constables in the Railway Police Force is justified; and

(c) why can't the railways exercise the option of redeploying personnel after capsule training orientation programme of existing employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) to (c) Ministry of Railways is not aware of any such estimate made by the World Bank. However, there are about 4186 surplus staff awaiting re-deployment as on 30.10.03 on the Railways. Surplus staff are retained and redeployed in areas requiring manpower, depending on their suitability as regards qualifications, medical fitness standards required etc. This is a continuous process. The present security scenario of the country has affected the Railways in a considerable measure in ensuring safe train operations. It is essential to strengthen railway in-house safety, security and maintenance systems, which includes RPF as well as Group 'C and 'D' safety categories. The recruitment would ensure more hands being available for essential needs for safety, security and operational requirements.

STD/ISD/PCO booths at railway stations

1985. SHRI GAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a highest bid of tender commission amount

varying from 100 to 200 per cent is being accepted by the administration for allotment of STD/ISD/PCO booths at various railway stations;

(b) whether it is also a fact that no fixed percentage of commission has been prescribed to be recovered from STD/ISD/PCO booth contractors; and

(c) if so, the details and reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) to (c) As per extant guidelines, for allotment of STD/ISD/PCO booths at Railway stations, two packet tendering system is to be adopted only at 'A', 'B' and 'C category of stations. Bidders are required to quote a percentage of commission earned by them from the telecom service provider i.e. MTNL/BSNL, etc. which they will pay to the Railways subject to a minimum of 10% of the commission. The bids are evaluated by a Committee of Senior Officers on whose recommendations, the booths are allotted to the highest bidders.

Rail projects in Orissa

1986. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Railways has been found slow in implementing projects, as per data furnished by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation;

(b) whether this has resulted in cost escalation;

(c) whether it is a fact that rail projects in Orissa are moving at a snail's pace and this in turn has been hampering the development of the State; and

(d) if so, action plan of the Government to speed up execution of these projects in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BASANAGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) and (b) The progress report compiled by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation mentions about cost and time overruns in railway projects. However, it is considered that cost and time overrun can only be calculated in those cases where the time schedule for completion of the project